

## Food Safety Alert – 12/05/06

We have another potential E. coli outbreak associated with produce. Yesterday I reported that undercooked meat was the source for the E. coli contamination that hit a New Jersey Taco Bell. According to Patricia Dillon, health director of Suffolk County, it was not an issue of undercooked meat. "The contamination is probably not from beef or chicken and may stem from produce such as lettuce, onions and tomatoes. The food was probably contaminated before it reached the restaurants." As of today two other Taco Bells have been implicated and a total of nine restaurants have been closed in New Jersey and New York. The latest reports show the injury toll to be 24 at this point. Two appear to be life threatening.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601103&sid=aCp5eLjRiy60>

*DCVelocity*, a magazine that deals with logistic solutions for distribution center management, has an article that discusses Dole's "field to fork" safety procedures. It begins with a brief history of the E. coli spinach outbreak before detailing its quick response, methods of tracking, and how it alerts grocers and distribution centers to pull the tainted food. It claims that Dole was in discussions with the FDA to help determine the source long before it had any confirmation that some of the product was packaged under its name. Steve Robinson, Dole's VP of Business Process Development explains, "We maintain a database of all customer data. We track all movements of each pallet and case that we manufacture using bar codes that are scanned at each step. If a recall is needed, we know specifically the date of and lot numbers of the products involved and can call up in the system to see exactly where that product was shipped." Once Dole had learned it was bagged spinach, it pulled its customer records to determine where it was shipped and notified those customers to pull all spinach in the pipeline. The article then discusses Aldata's G.O.L.D., software that is used in the industry by grocer wholesalers and retailers to track goods throughout the supply chain. It gives a lengthy discussion of the methods and procedures different distribution centers use when recalls are initiated.

<http://www.dcvelocity.com/articles/20061201/verticalfocus.cfm>